

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAIGON 13286 250253Z

63

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 PM-03 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 DODE-00 L-02 IO-03 DPW-01 PRS-01

INRE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 RSR-01 /060 W

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O R 231400Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4998

INFO USDEL JEC PARIS

CDR USSAG NKP RTAFB

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13286

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT PINS VS

SUBJECT: TPJMC: RETURN OF PRISONERS AND OTHER TWO PARTY COMMISSION
ISSUES

REF: SAIGON 13282

1. FOLLOWING WERE THE MAIN POINTS OF A LENGTHY DISCUSSION TODAY
WITH LTG PHAM QUOC THUAN, CHIEF OF GVNDEL TO TPJMC:

A. PRISONER RELEASES: SITES FOR RELEASE BY THE GVN OF ITS PRIS-
ONERS AND DETAINEES (REFTEL) HAVE BEEN MODIFIED. REPORTEDLY THE
AIRSTRIPE AT THIEN NGON (NEAR XA MAT IN TAY NINH, MR 3) CANNOT
TAKE THE PROPOSED TRAFFIC. THE THIRD INCREMENT, 640 CIVILIANS,
SCHEDULED FOR THIEN NGON, HAS THEREFORE BEEN RE-SCHEDULED FOR
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PAGE 02 SAIGON 13286 250253Z

LOC NINH (PHUOC LONG, MR 3). THUAN SAID THAT AFTER THAT THE

GVN MIGHT RE-SCHEDULE THE OTHERS FOR LOC NINH ALSO, OR THEY MAY ATTEMPT TO RETURN SOME OF THEM ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE THACH HAN RIVER AT QUANG TRI (THE PRG PREVIOUSLY INSISTED THAT THE RETURN BE MADE ON THE NORTH BANK). THE SCHEDULE FOR THE RETURN HAS ALSO SLIPPED; ONLY FIVE SORTIES OF 75 EACH, FOR A TOTAL OF 375 OUT OF A SCHEDULED 900, COULD BE FLOWN TO LOC NINH TODAY. THUAN RECEIVED WORD DURING DISCUSSION WITH EMBOFFS THAT TWO FLIGHTS WERE IN THE AIR WHEN WORD WAS RECEIVED THAT THE ICCS HAD STOPPED WORK AT THE RELEASE SITE AT 1700 HOURS AND THE FLIGHTS HAD RETURNED TO BIEN HOA.

B. ASKED IF TRAN NGOC CHAU AND OTHER CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES WOULD BE TURNED OVER TO THE PRG, THUAN REPLIED THAT THEY AND ALL OTHERS TO BE RELEASED COULD DECLARE TO THE ICCS AT THE RELEASE SITE A DESIRE TO REMAIN IN THE RVN AND SUCH REQUESTS WOULD BE HONORED. THUAN SAID THAT THIS PROCEDURE WOULD HELP COUNTER ANY FUTURE CHARGE BY THE PRG THAT A DECISION TO REMAIN IN THE RVN WAS INVOLUNTARY. (NOTE: THE GVN SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED AT THE JULY 23 AFTERNOON PRESS BRIEFING THAT MADAME NGO BA THANH'S NAME IS NOT ON THE LIST OF THOSE TO BE RETURNED TO THE PRG. A TPJMC GVNDL STAFF OFFICER EARLIER TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE PRGDEL DECLARED OUTRIGHT IN A RECENT MEETING THAT MADAME THANH "WAS NOT ONE OF THEIRS".

C. THUAN SAID THAT AGREEMENT ON THE RELEASES DOES NOT CHANGE THE GVN'S PREVIOUS POSITION THAT THE GVN WILL NOT ACCEPT PRISONERS FROM THE PRG UNLESS ICCS OBSERVERS ARE PRESENT. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE PRG HAD PROVIDED ADEQUATE GUARANTEES OF SAFE TRAVEL TO THE ICCS, OR WHETHER THE ICCS WOULD GO WITHOUT THEM, OBSERVING THAT THIS IS A MATTER BETWEEN THE ICCS AND THE PRG.

D. NEXT ISSUES IN TPJMC. THUAN THOUGHT THAT "MOBILE TPJMC INVESTIGATION TEAMS" TO INVESTIGATE CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS (SEE REFTTEL) WOULD BE THE MAIN ISSUE BEFORE THE TPJMC IN THE COMING PERIOD. THE REMAINING DISAGREEMENT CENTERS ON DETERMINING THE LOCATION OF OPPOSING TROOP UNITS AND THE AREAS THEY CONTROL -- AN ISSUE ON WHICH HE DOES NOT EXPECT EITHER THE GVN OR THE COMMUNISTS TO COMPROMISE. EXCEPT AT TONLE CHAM WHERE THE PRG WANTS TO DRAW A CIRCLE AROUND THE EMBATTLED ARVN DEFENDERS, THE COMMUNISTS ARE HOLDING OUT FOR THE DRAWING OF A LINE DEMARCATING THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAIGON 13286 250253Z

AREAS BETWEEN OPPOSING UNITS. THE GVN REJECTS THIS AS "NOT LOGICAL" AND ONLY A COMMUNIST PLOY TO ADVANCE ITS CLAIM TO ALL TERRITORY BEHIND THE LINE AND TO EXPAND THE AREA IT CLAIMS TO CONTROL.

E. MEETINGS OF OPPOSING TROOP COMMANDERS. THUAN SAID PROGRESS ON THIS ISSUE IS BLOCKED BY PRG INSISTENCE THAT THE LEVEL OF DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BE FROM COMPANY COMMANDER UP TO DIVISION

COMMANDER AND THE EQUALLY ADAMANT GVNDL STAND THAT MEETINGS ARE ONLY APPROPRIATE BETWEEN DIVISION COMMANDERS. LTG THUAN POINTED TO THE CURRENT ACTION ALONG ROUTE 1-A IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE AS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A CASE WHERE DIVISION COMMANDERS COULD MEET; NEARLY THE WHOLE 5TH ARVN DIVISION IS ENGAGED WITH NEARLY THE WHOLE 7TH NVA DIVISION. EVEN HERE, HOWEVER, THE COMMUNISTS INSIST THAT THE COMPANY AND BATTALION COMMANDER SHOULD MEET TO WORK OUT CEASEFIRE ARRANGEMENTS.

F. RELOCATION OF TPJMC DELEGATIONS. THUAN TOLD US TODAY THAT JOINT INVESTIGATION OF RELOCATION SITES FOR THE TPJMC DELEGATIONS IS IN ABEYANCE PENDING APPROVAL OF THE LIST OF SIX POSSIBLE SAIGON SITES BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

2. WE ASKED THUAN IF HE SENSED ANY LOOSENING IN THE ATTITUDE OF THE PRG, OR IMPROVEMENT IN THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE TPJMC MEETINGS, IN CONNECTION WITH AGREEMENT ON THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND DETAINEES. NOTING THAT THIS WAS THE ONLY NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, HE DENIED THAT THE PRG SIDE HAD ACTED OUT OF GOODWILL, CLAIMING RATHER THAT THE PRG AGREED TO THE RETURNS ONLY OUT OF FEAR THAT IT WOULD OTHERWISE LOOK BAD IN THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS. HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS WANTED TO CLEAR THEIR PRISON CAMPS OF ALL THE PRISONERS AND DETAINEES THEY HAVE ADMITTED TO HOLDING BEFORE THE DELEGATIONS OF THE POLISH AND CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETIES ARRIVE IN SOUTH VIETNAM TO INSPECT DETENTION SITES.
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